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ABSTRACT

MANY OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE ARGUE THAT THE STUDENTS ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO PLAN ESSENTIALLY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. THIS IS NOT WHAT MOST STUDENTS WANT; THEY WANT TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. THEY WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY NOT OUT OF A DESIRE FOR POWER, BUT TO IMPROVE THE INSTITUTION. OTHERS ARGUE THAT MOST STUDENTS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN GOVERNANCE, OR THAT THEIR TRANSITORY PRESENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY MAKES THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING UNDESIRABLE. BUT STUDENTS FORM A PERMANENT CONSTITUENCY. EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION CAN BENEFIT FROM STUDENT CONSULTATION. STUDENTS HAVE ALREADY EFFECTED CHANGES IN THEIR PROGRAMS AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. BOTH UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PARTICIPATE IN ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION. (AF)

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Hermes and Apollo

That most tireless of post-Elizabethan poetic voices, Mr. John Ciardi, has been overtaken in the poignant observation that "A university is what a college becomes when the faculty no longer cares about the students."

And the vice-president emeritus of the nation, upon his gracious, some would say belated, return to a campus more lively and more densely populated than that he had left twenty-five years before, has lately declared, "We must care about these students."

Is it possible, as we read, that at one of the most distinguished universities in the country, at the time of the notorious gymnasium exercises, "There was no senate or single body in which the undergraduate faculty met regularly to consider policy of any kind"? And is it true that at this same university the president of the student government association tried in vain for one and one-half years to secure an audience with the president of the University?

Is it also true, as we heard from the distinguished chairman of this present discussion in October a year ago, that a graduate student at the University of Michigan appeared one day in one of the graduate level courses, "ceremoniously laid out a piece of aluminum foil on the instructor's desk, took the textbook, poured kerosene on it and burned it, and then handed out and read a prepared statement to the class to the effect that the class was illegal because the students had not chosen the textbook, the students had not developed the syllabus, and the students had not controlled the course"?

Somewhere in between these regions of annoyed distrust lies the true university, and its building stone is RESPECT. Mutual respect among its several members.

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Typical is the expressed attitude of one high school senior bound for college: "I'm going to Purdue because I have respect for it. If the college won't listen to me, then it doesn't respect me and it's time for me to leave."

In an article entitled "And Whom Shall the Blind Lead?" Lewis B. Mayhew, Professor of Education at Stanford, begins by asserting: "The claim that students should have a major role in actual academic governance is based upon a false premise and some misconceptions. The premise is that students can plan, with reasonable awareness of the outcomes, what is essentially a professional service which they receive from the college and university. The falseness of this premise can be illustrated by considering realistically whether or not freshman medical students have the background to plan courses in surgery, business students to plan their work in accounting, or students in the physical or biological sciences to plan sequences of work in physics or bioengineering." This is an argument we hear constantly: Does a graduate student in chemistry know so well as the chemistry faculty what the curriculum should contain? And we are all familiar, in these days of relevance, with the story about the graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania who in the early '40's declined disdainfully the opportunity to study uranium compounds. And to the cry for student participation, Jacques Barzun replies, "What have they as yet done to earn a voice?"

I appreciate adequately, I think, the point that this argument has, but I grow a little weary of hearing it as a sufficient cause to still the voice of the student. I don't believe that students want to plan the curriculum, choose the textbooks, appoint the faculty, or plan the buildings. What they do want, obviously, is a voice in these critical decisions. They want to be acknowledged, to be accorded some respect, to be taken into account in more ways than as numbers sitting in a classroom. And why shouldn't the faculty lend an ear. Surely if

as faculty we are responsible enough to plan the proper programs we can properly evaluate the worth of student thinking on these same programs.

There is put forward also the argument: "It is clear that the students in their desire to have a greater role in the governance of the university are concerned not so much with the health of the university as an institution, itself, but are concerned to use the university as an agent for political action." On this point, the desire-for-power claim, I would like to recall some remarks addressed to graduate school deans by Mr. Denis Hayes, a student at Stanford, in October of 1968. He said at that time that he was "advocating this student-faculty participation in ultimate decision-making authority not in terms of rights and privileges, but, rather, in terms of the real contribution which I believe we can make. I urge such a course," he said, "not for political objectives, but, rather, for the renewed health and vigor of institutions of higher education, and through them, of our society and the world."

There is also advanced the argument that students are a very transient group, and thus so should have no part in determining the shape of an institution they will be leaving almost immediately. But even though the individual student spends only a few years at the university the student body is perpetuated and is always one of the constituent parts of the university. Besides there are such things as interested alumni, and universities have even been known to attach to their professional staff their own fresh graduates.

More telling are the arguments recently stated by the President of Yale University, Kingman Brewster. In taking a position against the broadening of decision-making powers, Brewster observed that most students were not enough interested in governance "to make it likely that 'participatory democracy' will be truly democratic," and he suggested that most students "would rather have the

policies of the university directed by the faculty and administration than by their classmates." He insisted, further, that "inherently executive matters" could become paralyzed through a "quasi-legislative process," and argued that academic decisions could be best made by "people who are devoting their personal energies and risking their professional reputations, full time, for the best years of their lives, for the quality of the institution."

Which brings us to the graduate student, who must be distinguished from the undergraduate and should also be distinguished from that post-baccalaureate person who from time to time enrolls in a course or two as a part of his continuing education. To what extent should the graduate student be given a voice in academic decision-making when (1) he is on the campus as a full-time student perhaps no more than a year, when (2) he has on many campuses little opportunity to assemble with his fellow graduate students and thus can hardly be considered a genuine representative, and when (3) he is immersed, normally much more so than the undergraduate, in the study of cosmic rays or the metaphysical imagery of John Donne?

I think we should remember that this graduate student often is a teaching assistant or research assistant, that as such he is properly considered a member of the faculty and sometimes even receives faculty parking privileges. Besides, studies have shown that graduate students are very nearly of an age with the faculty. And studies of the activist students at Columbia, Berkeley, and Harvard show them to be "generally of superior intellectual ability and achievement." In short, the distinctions that we sometimes like to make between graduate students and faculty are easily blurred.

It seems to me that the faculty are the center of the university. I believe, probably with most of us here, that it is the function of the administrative

officers to carry out the programs that the faculty want, to find a way to make it possible and pleasant for the faculty to teach what and how it wants. At the same time I believe that the faculty in determining what to teach and how, can not but benefit from the studied counsel of students, who are the most vitally concerned, and administrative officers, who were good teachers once.

A study conducted by Miss Ann Heiss ("Today's Graduate Student -- Tomorrow's Faculty Member," The Research Reporter, IV, No. 2 (1969), 5-7) reveals that 30% of the 3500 doctoral students consulted "reported that they had been instrumental in effecting changes in their graduate programs or in their institution's policies with respect to graduate students." And 89% of these reported that the changes had been accomplished through regular, well established channels.

There is a good bit of evidence to suggest that student concerns will be more and more with academic policy, with the nature of the curriculum, the quality of teaching, the depersonalization of education.

President Homer Babbidge of the University of Connecticut has urged colleges and universities to channel the critical energies of the students toward the question "How is a university best governed?" He predicts that "direct student challenge of the authority of faculties to make the academic ground rules in higher education will be the next step in student agitation."

And Donald Bowles, Academic Dean of the American University here in Washington, D. C., has declared: "As academic questions go, it seems unusually clear that greater student participation, as well as faculty participation, in the academic governance of a college or university should be regarded . . . as inevitable."

Jerome Skolnick, writing in The Politics of Protest, also predicts the increased participation of students in university decision-making and policy-making: "The inclusion of students in campus policy-making is a recognition that formal political means are necessary to provide adequate representation. It is neither realistic nor justifiable to expect contemporary students to remain content as second-class citizens within the university. When the university was less important, both in terms of its social and political significance and in terms of its decisive influence on the student's life-chances, such representation was correspondingly less critical. Today, the university -- like other large social institutions -- commands such critical importance on those areas that it has in effect made of students a new kind of group with new kinds of legitimate interests, and it must revise its structure of representation accordingly."

What is the present situation? The faculty, research studies have shown (see especially Robert G. Wilson and Jerry G. Gaff, "Student Voice -- Faculty Response," The Research Reporter, IV, No. 2 (1969), 1-4; W. Donald Bowles, "Student Participation in Academic Governance," Educational Record, XLIX (1968), 257-262; Ann M. Heiss, "Today's Graduate Student -- Tomorrow's Faculty Member," cited before) are generally favorably inclined toward student participation in the formulation of social regulations, but are generally reluctant to grant students a similar role in the academic policy-making. Although only 4% of the faculty, according to one study (Wilson and Gaff), declared that students should play no role in "formulating academic policies," it is apparent that professors are reluctant to share their academic power. Only 9%, for example, are willing to grant students "an equal vote with the faculty."

We are all familiar with the report returned to the House of Representatives in June of this year by the Honorable W. E. Brock of Tennessee and his committee.

The twenty-two congressmen who toured the colleges and universities had this to say: "On campus after campus we found widespread criticism from students who feel unable to communicate with administrators and faculty. They believe that no adequate channel is open to them to make their views known. Channels which do exist provide only limited access to individuals who will take responsibility for major decisions."

Also in June of this year the American Council of Education announced its intention to establish a Special Committee on Campus Disruption (not the most palatable of titles), whose job it would be to propose ways to strengthen procedures of self-regulation by colleges and universities. "This committee will focus," the Council explained, "on more effective decision-making, appropriate means of presenting grievances and proposing changes . . . " And then in August the Council announced the appointment of a Special Committee on Campus Tensions (a very slight improvement in title). As it happens, this is a most distinguished committee. It is composed of nineteen very able people, including three students (Joseph Rhodes, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts; Patrick Shea, student council president at Stanford University; and Richard von Ende, a graduate student at the University of Kansas. And it is headed by Sol Linowitz, recently the American amabssador to the Organization of American States and presently a trustee for Cornell University, Hamilton College, and the Consortium of Washington, D. C. universities. We are to have a report from this committee in April.

Much depends of course on the stand we take on the real fundamentals. What is graduate education for? Is it, as some maintain, "to help the student attain self-knowledge and personal identity." Or is it, as others insist, "to help the student acquire an understanding and mastery of some specialized body of knowledge."

More fundamental still is the idea of a University. We don't appear to be agreed on what the university is, or should be (read Clark Kerr and Jacques Barzun). It has even been suggested that "the professors are running universities for different reasons than the students attend them."

We have some special problems in graduate work, and I think the biggest need is to preserve and extend the intimacy between professor and student, and the next, if it is not the same, is to humanize the doctoral program. Of those receiving the Ph.D. degree in English recently, 70% (see Don Cameron Allen, The Ph.D. in English and American Literature) reported real dissatisfaction with some phase of the program. And these people are all members of teaching faculties now.

Permit me some observations and recommendations based on the foregoing:

(1) Life would be much easier if we did not have students cluttering up our campuses. They are a nuisance, and I am sure that we could all get on very well without them. It is easy to agree again with Hubert Humphrey, who while he can spin a neat, fresh figure is not above an occasional cliché, that these "patriots of dissent" do "sometimes . . . produce more heat than light."

(2) But we cannot take students for granted, or cannot, as members of my freshman composition class keep insisting, take them "for granite."

(3) The old swallow-the-goldfish days that some of us remember are down the drain. And the goldfish die as speedily in the water as out. The student concerns now are, rightly: the Viet-Nam war; Nuclear testing; automation; human relations; poverty; the draft and ROTC; super technology; air and water pollution; the depersonalization of education.

(4) Confidence in the present value system of our society has been sorely shaken, and the university, which to many clearly reflects and nourishes

these values, is naturally the chief target of the disillusioned.

(5) Students are crying out against meaninglessness, against the hurdle course for the graduate degree, against any degree which requires the study of irrelevancies.

(6) There is some danger that large numbers of students will simply "cop out," withdraw into a kind of privatism.

(7) Students, if they are to have a voice in academic policy, should be representatives, not self-interested delegates merely.

Halton Arp, in his remarks on "The Need for a New Kind of Academic Responsibility" (AAUP Bulletin for September, 1969), insists that there be student participation in policy-making decisions of the university. "The students undeniably," he asserts, "bring energy and social morality into the picture. The latter I suspect they have because they have freshly learned the ideals of generations past and have not yet been dulled by years of compromise. They also have a legitimate claim to share in decisions because, while the university is a small percentage of a trustee's life, and perhaps 50 per cent of the life of the faculty and administration, it is nearly 100 per cent of a student's life, and his home as well, for four, six, or sometimes longer years."

The ferment that characterizes almost every college and university campus in the country is regarded by the more thoughtful educators as a constructive force which will effect wholesome reforms in our educational system. Dean Lawson Crowe has put it well: ". . . the better things are understood by the students the more fruitful our work will be and the more success we will have in promoting higher education in this country. I see very little to be lost and a great deal to be gained from letting students in on what is going on."

For these considerations I am recommending that students, undergraduate and

graduate alike, be given a real voice in the administration of university affairs, including academic decision-making. I am recommending it, not because students are now demanding such a voice, but because it is an obligation that they should have assumed long, long ago, even before the time when the hoary-headed deans here assembled were earnest undergraduates.

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